



EastBordNet

COST Action IS0803

Scientific report in realm of Photography Project

**Remaking Eastern Borders in Europe:
a network of exploring social, moral and material relocations of
Europe's eastern peripheries**



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“One State Various Borders (Or East Meets West)”
Various Locations in Israel from Sep. 29th until Oct. 4th

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“One State Various Borders (Or East Meets West)”

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Within the aim of the photo project “One State Various Borders (Or East Meets West)”, our small international group was afforded the opportunity to examine and reflect upon varying borders - both visible and invisible - within Israel. Our sights of interest included:

- Tel Aviv-Yaffo -- a mixed city of Arabs and Jews?
- The Wall -- the Erez border passage of Gaza Strip -- Separation between ethnic or national groups
- Tel Aviv -- old and new central bus stations and Shapira neighborhood -- a state within a state -- migrant workers in a Jewish state
- Jerusalem -- unified or split -- holy or secular -- a city with multiple facets -- separation between ethnic or national groups
- The wall of separation between Judea and Samaria and the State of Israel

Throughout this photography and border excursion, an overriding theme prevailed, namely, the existence of ethnic and national segregation and ‘othering’ permeating each of the border areas we explored. In some places we saw border divisions, walls, barbed wire, secured constructions with surveillances, motion detectors, and even machine gun-type apparatuses, ready to shoot. At other points, the actual border divisions were visually undetectable yet the ramifications of segregation were visceral.

Here, we observed the inextricable connection between citizenship constructs and structures of domination, in which distinctions are made between those ‘worthy’ of and those denied (access to) rights, as well as the consequences for those not permitted membership status among the national elite. As such, we gained insight into the social constructs in Israel which serve to reaffirm, propagate, and secure power structures and categories of classification, distinguishing the Israeli-Jews from the Israeli-Arabs and again from migrant workers and various ‘others’.

Throughout this excursion, I was reminded of my own PhD research topic, which focuses on the adaptation process of Bosnian refugees in Berlin and Chicago. With avowed stances “Germany for the Germans” and “Israel for the Jewish-Israelis”, the rights of citizenship in the two countries have long been divided, delineating between citizens and noncitizens, or into first- and second-class citizens. While Germany’s citizenship rights have long been determined based on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, ‘the law of the blood’ (Fetzer, 2000), implying the significance of German blood, citizenship rights in Israel are based on definitions of Israeli-ness and Jewish-ness. With the implementation of the 1950 Law of Return “Every Jew has the right to come to this country as an *oleh*’ (a Jew returning from Diaspora). Any Jew may ‘claim’ his Israeli citizenship upon arrival in Israel and be offered citizenship rights and obligations available to all other Israeli citizens...” (Harper and Zubida, 2010: 4). But according to Etienne Balibar, the goal of creating an ethnic basis, a *Volk*, an imagined community, constitutes as racism. “Racism”, he argues, “provides a construction of a pure race for construction of the nation” (11). As such, I intend to describe my impressions of the photo excursion in Israel against this background.

Conflicting narratives, yet still an interconnected identity

On the first day, our tour led us to Yaffo, now known as Tel Aviv-Yaffo, where two speakers took turns depicting the Israeli and Palestinian narratives. The speakers provided alternating accounts, told from the strikingly different perspectives of the Israeli-Arabs and Israeli-Jews of Tel Aviv-Yaffo. Each speaker intentionally provided a one-sided explanation, reflecting the differences in ethnic identities and the visible and implied impacts that borders have had on the surrounding community identities as well as the overall national identity. These identities, emerging out of the historical and political division and ensuing changes in Yaffo with the arrival of the Zionist movement to Israel have affected the core dominant Israeli identity construction.

When considering the identity of Jewish Israelis, associations of Zionism, anti-Semitism, pogroms, the holocaust, persecution, annihilation and “victimized self” often comes to fore. Within the Israeli Jewish community (made up of ethno-Jews, European-Jews, Ethiopian-Jews, former Soviet

Union-Jews, seculars Jews, etc.) diverse identities and cultural backgrounds exist. Yet despite these differences, “all the Jewish groups are united in believing in the necessity of a Zionist state, and in its ability to protect Jewish interests within Israel and abroad” (Smoocha, 1997: 226). As such, they share a common understanding of being a long persecuted people, continuously suffering from an exposed and threatened identity. Their shared intention is to maintain and protect the one state they have. Being surrounded by Israeli-Arabs is hence perceived as a threat to their identity and security.

A similar notion is true for the Palestinians, who consider themselves homeless and in a constant position of victimization due to their forced displacement and minority status in the State of Israel. “Dispossession and uprootedness amplify feelings of being deserted and at the mercy of stronger forces” (Smoocha, 1997: 218). The status of Arabs in the State of Israel is a special one - it allows for their presence, but does not award them equal citizenship to the Israelis nor does it grant them their own national identity. Arab citizens in the State of Israel are essentially castigated to being “second-class” residents. Because the Palestinians have not been awarded legitimate state recognition, visible symbols of meaning, such as national flags, official state holidays or hymnals are permitted them little significance. Mention of ‘Palestinians’ in Israeli history books is avoided altogether as a means for Israelis to distance themselves from events played out in the name of Zionism. Generally, Palestinian Arabs lack any defined and official legal status in their own country and further suffer from great discriminations and injustices while living within the State of Israel.

Interestingly, both Israelis and Palestinians identify themselves based on their feelings of insecurities, vulnerability and by the sense of always being dispossessed. “Both are centered around the poles of victim-warrior/struggler. Their suffering gives them no option but to struggle to maintain their identities in the eyes of the world and to maintain the rights which belong to peoples. ...identities are manifested through the duality of insecurities and strain” (Smoocha, 1997: 218). Because of their common fears of the ‘other’, social constructions have developed based on territorial rights and influenced by demographics. The implication of the Jewish majority in Israel is that Israelis hold vast political power over the Palestinians, resulting in a variety of

exclusionary tactics, some of which we witnessed throughout our week's excursion and which I describe below.

On this first day, in framing the two accounts against each other, the listener was manipulated to believe which ever speaker provided a more convincing narrative. Both accounts mirrored truthful events, but maintained one-sided perspectives. As a U.S. American, living in Germany, I have heard both accounts before. Since I grew up in the United States, I learned the Israeli narrative and was socialized to support this side. Then when I moved to Germany, I heard the Palestinian narrative for the first time and was offered a different perspective. What I find striking is that external government regimes consistently take sides in the Israeli/Palestinian ethnic conflict (in other conflicts as well) and propagate certain beliefs and rationalizations throughout their own society.

I was also reminded of the extent to which we are all socialized by given definitions of belonging and norms dictating national identity. Because local norms sanction behavior and power positions, any person or group who is perceived to be clearly different from the norm (in appearance, behavior, religion, etc.), may be easily targeted for acting deviant from the norm. Chetkow-Yanoov (1999) refers to such accepted social structures as stemming from a paradigm of elitism, privilege, or chosen-ness that greatly influence us to conceive of the universe in dichotomous terms, such as light and dark, good and evil, Jew and Palestinian etc. He goes on to explain that such a paradigm is convenient for maintaining the privileges of members of local and national elites. According to Hunter (1953), power structured establishments are accepted today as "appropriate norm setters, controllers of available resources, makers of policy, and authorizers of implementation and enforcement as well as determiners of the rules of the power game itself". Along this same line of reasoning, the presentation of the two narratives additionally impressed upon me the idea that this conflict is not rare, but that many other similar accounts of domination/oppression exist currently throughout other parts of the world and have existed for centuries.

As such, the cultural order defines who belongs to the in-group and who is castigated to the out-group, the "undeserving" group. This is further served by and secured through discrimination and racism as they act as

stabilizing factors in society (Kovel, 1988). After the methodological approach with the two narratives, I felt helpless and hopeless and wondered whether a two-state solution in Israel may ever be reached, whether the interconnectedness of the Palestinian-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli identities could be altered, and whether past pains could eventually be healed. Finally, it became clear to me how difficult it will be today to define the identities of the Palestinian-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli exclusive of one another due to their shared struggle for land, power and recognition. Each national narrative reinvents its place and its memory of natural borders past. Even after knowing these borders are mere inventions, once imagined they become part of the real narrative. During the excursion, one speaker said: a place is not a place without relations to it and memory, which implies the difficulty involved in attempting to remedy this conflict since each groups' memory incorporates a sense of loss and of being a victim.

Gentrification of Arab neighborhoods

As the first day continued, we toured a neighborhood in Yaffo in which land is being bought and auctioned off for settlements. While seemingly fair, this policy is interlaced with institutional discrimination, effectively preventing the Yaffo Arabs from purchasing any of this land, which leads back to citizenship laws and limited home ownership rights.

It's important to recall that before 1948, this land belonged to the 100,000 Palestinians living in the territory. After the war and displacement, only about 4,000 Palestinians remained, who were quickly expelled into 'ghettos', a term the European-Jews brought with them from their experiences during World War II. In 1948, the 'absentee law' went into force resulting in the loss of home ownership rights for those not at home at the time the 'counting' took place. As a result, expelled refugees in Lebanon, for example, lost their property in Tel Aviv due to their absence during the counting. With the economic strike in 1949, most Arab business merchants further lost the right to own businesses. Some, however, were granted a 1/3 ownership right, meaning they had to pay the Israeli state ownership rights until they died and were not permitted to make repairs on their property without acquiring permission from the Israeli state, as 2/3 owner of the property. Visual

repercussions of this law are evident in the remaining Arab neighborhoods today.

Arab citizens in Israel have been enduring an on-going struggle for liberation from colonial domination and subjugation since the State of Israel became recognized. Expropriating and depriving Arabs of their land has been a means to limit the potential power of Palestinians. The more land Israel obtains, the better the opportunity to serve Israeli interests and to expand its state authority. "Planning policies are instruments to control the Arabs and prevent their 'expansion', by allocating more than adequate land reserves to Jewish communities" (Ghanem, 1998:238). Because Israeli Arabs are excluded from operative level powers, policies controlling legislation, budgets, land allocations and zoning plans, inequality is the outcome. In addition to suffering serious housing shortages as a direct result of government policy, Palestinians face further discrimination in education, in welfare distribution and in basic infrastructure services like water and electricity. "According to official statistics, about 60% of Arab citizens live below the poverty line" (Ghanem, 1998: 236). This was clearly evident after walking through the Yaffo neighborhood in which Arab dwellings resembled make-shifts huts with no electricity or heating. Next to these creations are brand new security-controlled housing structures resembling homes in "gated communities". This contrast in wealth and in access is emblematic of the discriminatory practices employed by the Israeli government. While Arabs have a 'right' to purchase land, they are effectively unable to do so. As a result, 93% of the land is now currently owned by the Israeli state.

Our guide told us of an attempt made by a community of Arabs to purchase one particular plot of land only to be outbid by a mere 500 shekel by some Jewish bidder(s). Now the former Arab neighborhood is in the process of gentrification. Unable to purchase the land themselves, increasingly more foreigners and people of Jewish decent are moving into the newly constructed and extremely costly homes. The municipality likewise attempts to present an image abroad of there being harmonious relations, mediation courses, and conflict resolution initiatives in the area as a form of enticement. Yet these peace efforts exclude Arab facilitators and trainers, thus, further maintaining Israel's accepted hierarchical power positions. Meanwhile, many American

Jews and European diplomats have been purchasing the luxury beachside properties from the Israeli government on land that was unfairly taken from previous Arab residents.

Border towns

We started the tour on the second day at the Erez check point, the only human crossing point between Gaza and Israel. Since it was a holiday, the border passing appeared abandoned. Despite this, guards and video cameras were monitoring our every move. Having lived for over eight years in Berlin, Germany, this sort of border crossing was reminiscent of the crossings that used to be dispersed throughout the city along the Berlin wall, which have meanwhile been reconstructed for purposes of tourism. Accustomed to the notion that such divisions are constructions from the past, the presence of modern day border divisions in Israel serves as a powerful marker of the ongoing conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. While discussing this very topic, I felt very uncomfortable sitting at the border crossing, knowing we were being observed and aware of the blood shed as a result of this division.

Before the war in 2000, 30,000 Palestinian workers crossed in and out of Gaza regularly. By mid-2003, this number decreased to just 14,000 people on average per day. Following several incidents in which some Israeli soldiers were killed between 2003-2004, Israel ceased allowing the free passage of Palestinians through the Gaza crossing; only those in need of urgent humanitarian aid are permitted out now. This marks an important milestone as it proved that Israel is able to dismantle settlements and move them from one place to another and it also confirmed that Israelis no longer needed to go into the Gaza strip. Even though Israel pulled out, it still clearly controls the land, sea, air and surrounding area.

While overlooking the wall at one of the observation points, later in the day, our tour guide coincidentally received a telephone call from a humanitarian aid worker in Gaza, who relayed details about how difficult life in Gaza can be for the refugees. Inside the Gaza strip, which covers 360 km², there are eight refugee camps. This is the most crowded place in the world according to our guide. Most of the refugees had been expelled by the Israeli

state during the 1948 war and have been living there ever since. After Israel declared Gaza a 'hostile city' in 2007, the government adopted the policy to no longer owe Gaza residents anything. As a result, reduced services and transport of food, hospital and medical care, electricity, and water soon followed.

Today in Gaza electricity runs 12-16 hours a day. International relief organizations attempt to respond to the needs of these refugees, but there are not enough services available, particularly because they are not allowed to move freely in and out of Gaza. There are no exports from Gaza, not even produce can be exported. Since the economy in Gaza is broken, the few resources brought in have meanwhile become difficult to sell. Generally, not enough building supplies are permitted in. New infrastructure and factories can not be built without proper building materials, so there is little option to earn money. There is an 80% unemployment and poverty rate. Poorer families suffer the most. Knowledge exchange is at a standstill in Gaza since residents can not leave to study nor can foreign students enter. Courses on hygiene and home repairs are offered by the relief agencies but there are not enough supplies to make noticeable improvements. Overall, the situation for the refugees seems very bleak. As is often the case, powerful elites control a variety of subgroups by restricting them to the status of victim as a means of oppressing them. In this case, the forms of oppression are expressed openly through institutional policies and procedures preventing the refugees from benefiting, for example, from accessing building materials, making infrastructural improvements, enabling job options, housing, education and health care.

'Shielded' Jewish collectives

After this exchange at the Erez border crossing, we visited two different communities, the Nativ Ha'asara Moshav and the Kibbutz Nir-Yam, both of which border the Gaza Strip. At both sights, we spoke with female Jewish residents of the cooperatives, who took us to different observation points along the Israel/Gaza strip border and who shared their own experiences and perspectives on the border. For them, the wall and ethnic conflict have also caused dislocation, death of neighbors, fear and insecurity. The psychological

damage is often worse than the physical damage as the shelling prevents normal life activities, creating tensions and an unceasing fear. Viewing the border from the Israeli side and hearing about life in a Kibbutz or a Moshav was very interesting. We managed to take some powerful pictures, as a result, contrasting the different realities, though, we were not granted access into Gaza.

What struck me on this day was the erection of 'shielded' rooms, schools, playgrounds, and even bus stops throughout these Israeli neighborhoods bordering the wall. Intended as a form of protection, these constructions are also emblematic of Israeli state preference for Jewish-Israelis over Arab-Israelis. Rather than investing money in peace negotiations, the State of Israeli prefers to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to construct bomb-type shelters throughout Jewish-Israeli border towns in order to protect inhabitants from rocket-shelling dispersed from Arab settlements. An estimated five to twelve thousand rockets exploded from 2001 until now along the Gaza Israel border and thus the need to protect Israeli inhabitants is real. But the contrast is interesting. As Israeli children ride to school in armored trucks escorted by Israeli soldiers, Palestinian children are confronted by Israeli soldiers with machine guns, preventing their access to school since schools close to Israeli settlements or army outposts are often regarded as security threats and limited to only Jewish-Israelis.

This marks yet another example of structural discrimination in which a selection process occurs, differentiating those 'worthy' of and those denied (access to) rights and protection. We were informed on this day that the Israeli government purposely placed the Kibbutzim along the borders in order to protect Israeli power and goals: 1) to conquer the land, 2) to occupy the labor market through Hebrew language, and 3) to enforce security through an enclosed community. As such, these enclosed Israeli settlements purposely serve as "gated communities" with powers to determine characteristics for exclusion and inclusion. At the same time, the Kibbutzim has had a lot of assets and industry, employing many outside laborers over the years, providing them jobs that would have otherwise been absent. To be fair, it is also believed that early generations were naive enough to not understand the implications of their actions. Rather, they were so intent on their own ideology,

on creating collective equality within the community that they overlooked external aims of the state. With increased awareness and mounting impacts of the war, many members have reconstructed meanings regarding the border and ethnic division. One of our guides, for example, explained how her son had managed to avoid having to join the Israeli military, which involved a complicated process of interviews. He was persuasive in his position as a conscientious objector due to his experiences living next to the Gaza border.

Migrant Workers

On the third day, we toured south Tel Aviv, stopping along the old and new bus station terminals and the Shapira neighborhood. Originally, this area was the arrival point for new Zionist Jewish immigrants. Now it is a meeting and sleeping place for non-Jewish migrant workers. Since this area composes the largest concentration of migrant workers in Israel, this day was the most topically relevant for my work in Germany, where I advocate on behalf of migrants so that they may enjoy equal access to the German labor market. I found the current political situation in Israel regarding migrant workers and their children fascinating and was again reminded of how similarly nation-states behave when it comes to foreigners, often making references regarding national security and protection.

Since Jews are preferred over all other citizens in the State of Israel, this has lasting consequences not only on the lives of Palestinians but also on the situation of migrant workers. Prior to the first Intifada in 1987, all working migrants in Israel were composed of Palestinians. After the Intifada, Palestinians ceased working for Jewish-Israelis and so the economy began to deteriorate, for instance, the hotel and construction industries came to a complete halt at this time. In response the government began replacing previous Palestinian workers with former Soviet Union migrant workers to take on the 'dark, dirty, and dangerous' jobs that Israelis refused. In 1989 Sharon even declared a national emergency and opened the gate to migrant workers, similar to the guest worker recruitment phase that transpired in Germany between the 1960's and 1970's.

Visually different from the Israelis, however, the predominantly Asian migrant workers and African and eastern European migrant workers were

unable or unwilling to 'blend in' to Israeli society. "While civic nationalism looks to law to bind a society together, ethnic nationalism situates attachments as inherited, not as chosen (Ignatieff, 1993: 4-5)" (in: Tazreiter, 2004:87). According to Miskovic, "The major differences between nations and ethnicities appear to be in their relations to the state: Ethnic identity is linked to ethnic self-definition (what one thinks and feels one is), while nationality is associated to one's belonging as ascribed by the state" (Miskovic, 2007:517).

Having observed the inextricable connection in Israel between citizenship constructs and structures of domination in which distinctions are made between those 'worthy' of and those denied (access to) rights, I was consistently reminded of my own PhD research topic. To me, it seems as if both the German and Israeli states purposely foster variances in its citizenship and residence rights, enabling some residents select rights while denying others access or eligibility. For example, babies of migrant workers in Israel are neither granted rights based on 'law of the blood' nor 'law of the soil'. Instead pregnant migrant workers are expected to return to the home country to bear the child and then to reapply if interested in returning. Generally, these women and their babies are not granted reentrance to Israel. Employers of migrant workers are also supposed to provide accommodation, medical care, social benefits, school, language training, etc., which is part of the conditions for attaining and granting employment, yet government enforcement is lax in this regard (Harper & Zubida, 2010). This may explain why we saw hundreds of migrant workers hanging out around the old and new train stations, waiting to sleep for the night. Either the promised accommodation failed to be delivered or these migrant workers had meanwhile moved into an 'illegal status'.

While Germany imposed its first ever integration policy in 2005, attempts to control and steer immigration movements have been taking place for years, yet often haphazardly. In contrast, Israel's only immigration policy is for the Jewish Diaspora returning to the Israel State. When it comes to monitoring the movements of migrant workers, Israel relies on deportation efforts as the main means by which to control migration. The ambiguity of both countries' current political and social landscapes in dealing with strangers is in part attributed to this hierarchal ethnicization achieved through

political legislation that distinguishes between the 'worthy' and the 'worthless'. Tazreiter (2004) affirms that any discussion on immigration, or any analysis on the merits of immigration systems and models of integration inevitably coincide with issues of nation and identity: "how they are constituted, maintained and reinforced" (87). Although the approaches in the two countries vary, the outcome is similar. Ethnic nationalism persists and is paramount in Germany's exclusionary asylum and immigration policy and in Israel's total lack of an immigration policy to address the needs of migrant workers. Ironically, despite their ethnonational stances, both Germany and Israel are nevertheless reliant on migrant workers.

Continued evidence of structural discrimination

On the fourth day of our excursion, we explored the border area between east and west Jerusalem, the old city, and the Armenian quarter and continued to examine further examples of structural discrimination. The exchanges we had with Prof. Zubida were particularly illuminating in this regard.

Because Jewish citizens are preferred in many situations, the legal benefits they enjoy compared to those of Arabs are vast. "It (Israel) permits its Arab citizens to exercise basic rights, including the right to vote for and be elected to legislative bodies, freedom of expression, and freedom of movement and organization. At the same time, however, it follows policies of domination and control that guarantee continued Jewish hegemony and Arab marginality in all fields" (Ghanem, 1998:237). At the structural level, Israeli-Arab citizens are denied inclusion to many of the political decision-making centers. They are exempted from the compulsory military service. They are systematically denied positions of public, social, military and economic power and senior positions in these areas are only rarely offered Arab citizens. They endure such cogent political discrimination that even special institutions designed especially for "Arab affairs" have been established and promoted in the Israeli government in order to "deal" with Arabs. Discrimination is also apparent in the broadcast media as media reports commonly focus on "problems" associated with Palestinians, whereas their concerns are rarely considered. "The exclusion of the Arabs from the broadcast media is a

systematic phenomenon that serves to reinforce the Jewish ethnic character of the state” (ibid: 230).

There are also idiosyncrasies in budget allocation. More money is invested in Israeli infrastructure while less and less economic development is directed towards rebuilding Arab communities, which is visibly evident. For example, Israelis benefit from paved streets, sidewalks, a functioning sewage system, running water, garbage pick-up, recycling options, playgrounds for children, beneficial zoning laws and ability to purchase auctioned public spaces, among other things. Arab residents lack access to many of these infrastructural benefits. Suffering under a minority status, Arab residents in the State of Israel have furthermore little political power to alter their situation. Meanwhile, the homes of Palestinians are effectively being usurped or destroyed by Israeli officials. The state administrators in Jerusalem claim that Palestinians have, apparently, built homes “illegally” on archeological fundament. Consequently, the Israeli government has enforced the razing of hundreds of Israeli-Arab homes in Gaza and east Jerusalem. In the historical area where Israeli-Arabs are being removed from their homes, Jewish citizens are replacing them.

On the outskirts of Jerusalem, we met an elderly Palestinian woman, whose home was taken from her and her husband (who has since passed away due to the stress). In their place, a young Jewish family has moved in and is likely receiving government subsidies to do so. Nowhere else to go, the former resident sits in her living room chair positioned on the sidewalk under a tree across the street from her former house, and watches and waits, helpless to alter her situation. Meanwhile, security cameras have been installed on her former house, keeping her from returning.

Two-state solution?

On the last day of our tour, we examined the wall of separation between Judea and Samaria and the State of Israel. On this day, our guide was an admitted Zionist, active in peace negotiations for the Center of Middle East Peace based in Washington D.C. He began by positioning himself: He hopes for a two-state solution otherwise the conflict will never end. But how the two states shall be divided, where the border route will be, and how many people

would need to be evacuated was still unclear. One thing was certain - the agreements proposed by the Israeli government would never be accepted by the Palestinians. Thus, he and others in his organization attempt to present with GPS maps various border division trajectories, to help steer peace mediations.

International mediators have been involved in this effort towards peace negotiations. The United States, for example, has been very active in this regard. The U.S., however, has been criticized for supporting mainly the side of the Israelis. In the past the U.S. has urged: "Stop the fighting, stop the violence and make amends", yet behind the scenes, it has also been known to deliver weapons, bombs and artillery to the Israeli government. Nonetheless, I was surprised to hear our guide's perspective regarding the most recent peace talks involving Hilary Clinton. He explained that U.S. mediators have been pleading with Israel to stop the razing of Palestinian homes and to alter the planned trajectory of settlement expansion.

The engine driving the machinery of the Israeli Jews is, one, the usurpation of the Jordan Valley to secure the Israelis from attacks and, secondly, the widening of the narrow corridor towards Jerusalem. Any place named in the Bible or tracing back to Judaism is essential to Israel. The establishment of Israeli settlements in the West Bank is a long-term strategic takeover effort. By widening the narrow corridor to Jerusalem, however, a two-state solution could never come to fruition, which is why international mediators have been so insistent on curbing Israeli expansion in the area.

My take on the situation is simple: as long as the Israelis continue to exert control over the resources, land, power, and political discourse, while the Palestinians continue to be repressed, the vicious cycle in the Middle East likely will not end. If a state does not allow for equality before the law for all of its citizens, after all, then there is no possibility for democracy. Apparently, however, this is a price Israel is willing to pay, as the Jewish state continues to deny equal opportunities to Israeli-Arabs in their preference toward the Jewish people and in the name of national security. Meanwhile, the definitions of the two identities as well as lasting stereotypes on both sides continue to influence and encourage an image of evil enemy. In 1967 and again in 1993, for example, Israelis had a chance to make peace with the Palestinians and

with their Arab neighbors by withdrawing from the West Bank and Gaza, but lacked the willingness or generosity to do so. And now Israel again finds itself surrounded by 'enemies', dependent on leaders whose chief skill is exercising military force, while it strategizes further spreading Israeli settlements along new trajectories in Arab settlements.

Recognizing and allowing for two a two-state solution, with separate national identities is considered the only solution to the conflict. Because territory, a homeland, one's own citizenship, a sense of belonging, a feeling of having a supportive network etc. - because all of this is crucial in determining a nation's identity and location, it is seems imperative that the Palestinians finally gain this recognition and independence in Israel. For Palestinians, it is important to be seen by international factors, such as Western nations, as a "collective identity in the international structure of sovereign nation-states" (219).

Summary

Overall, I thought this photo excursion was a wonderful opportunity to learn about the Middle East Conflict from objective and informed academics. I gained vast insight into the border constructions in Israel and the resulting consequences this sort of division commonly has on the identity of its residents. The fact that Lena Malm, a professional photographer, joined us on this excursion adds to the overall learning benefits of this project, as others not present will be able to benefit long-term from the visual portrayal of these borders through the photos and forthcoming exhibition. As such, these photos maintain a type of 'learning sustainability' as they frame the borders in a transportable context. In addition, through her professionalism, I myself felt comfortable enough to take many more pictures than I would be accustomed to doing and have since shown my pictures and spoken of our excursion to numerous colleagues and friends in Germany, hereby, extending the learning outcomes to an even wider audience than would normally have been expected. Many people I know find the topic to be very intriguing and the photos serve perfectly in transferring these learning outcomes.

Again, what struck me throughout this experience was how consistent segregation and 'othering', power absorption and misuse are applied

throughout the world, regardless of the stakeholders involved. Numerous parallels occurred to me during the week in Israel regarding similar cases of ethnic and national divisions and the affects visible and invisible border constructions have. I was reminded of the former Berlin wall and the wall being erected along the United States/Mexico border, of covert and overt cases of racism and discrimination throughout the world, but particularly in the United States targeting African Americans and certain migrant groups. I was reminded of the general fear permeable in Germany and many other EU countries regarding the 'stranger', foreigners, and migrant workers. In particular, I thought of the Roma who are currently being targeted and expelled throughout Europe. Finally, the ethnic discord throughout Israel reminded me of Nazi Germany and related events during WW II, the war in Rwanda, as well as examples from my interviews with survivors of the Bosnian war. Overall, it seems that 'othering' is a common factor in our daily interactions, a part of life, tantamount to breathing and eating. Of course what's interesting is what people do, the choices they make in these unequal power relations, how they respond, whether they contribute in oppressing or whether they break away from normative behavior and use their power for means of justice. I prefer the latter approach of course.

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